



Sunnyvale Department of Public Safety

FIRE PREVENTION UNIT



HAUNTED HOUSES - STANDARDS

SCOPE

These regulations shall apply to temporary Haunted Houses, Ghost Walks, or similar operations, open to the public, where combustible decorative material and confusing sounds and/or visual effects are present.

DEFINITIONS

Haunted House: A temporary or permanent building or structure, or portion thereof, which contains a system that transports passengers or provides a walkway through a course so arranged that the means of egress are not apparent due to theatrical distractions, not visible due to low illumination, are disguised or are not readily available due to the method of transportation through the building or structure.

Ghost Walks: Similar to Haunted House and may include both indoor and outdoor areas where egress to a public way is similarly not readily identifiable.

PERMITS

1. **A permit application shall be submitted a minimum of two (2) weeks prior to the event.** An inspection shall be required for approval prior to operation.
2. Additional permits may be required from the local Planning and/or Building Departments. Those agencies should be contacted for requirements.
3. Permit application packet should include the following:
 - a. A dimensioned site plan shall indicate proximity of the event building(s) to other structures or hazardous areas, and path of travel from the event building or area to the public way.
 - b. A floor plan showing the following:
 1. Dimensions (total square footage, width of exits, aisles or interior exit pathways, etc.)
 2. Location of exits, exit signs, and emergency lighting units
 3. Location of fire extinguishers
 4. Location of electrical panel(s) and light switches
 5. Location of smoke detectors and/or fire alarm panel
 6. Normal use of any structure(s), i.e., auditorium, school, church, etc.
 7. Staff positions
 - c. A written emergency procedure (see "Emergency Planning" section).

City of Sunnyvale - Department of Public Safety
Fire Prevention & Hazardous Materials
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REQUIREMENTS

1. Emergency Planning:

- a. Maximum occupant load (which shall include staff) shall be determined during plan review. A sign stating maximum occupant capacity shall be posted in a visible location near the entrance, and staff shall control the flow of patrons so as not to exceed this limit.
- b. A written emergency procedure plan shall be provided with the permit application packet. All employees shall be trained in emergency procedures.
- c. The emergency procedure plan shall include training of staff and familiarization with fire alarm tone. Specific personnel shall be designated to turn off all distracting special effects, such as the sound system, strobe lights, fog machine, etc., and turn on the lights when alerted by the fire alarm or when otherwise notified of an emergency condition.
- d. The event shall be adequately staffed to control the occupant load and assist patrons in exiting should an evacuation become necessary. Staffing level shall be determined upon review of plans and may be increased at the discretion of the Fire Department.
- e. All emergency staff shall carry flashlights and know the location of all exits, fire extinguishers, light switches, electrical panels and emergency phones.
- f. A fire drill demonstrating the implementation of the emergency plan may be required at the time of inspection.
- g. Phone communication shall be readily available for the purpose of calling 911 in the event of an emergency.

2. Exits

- a. Two exits shall be provided from each room with an occupant load of 50 or more. Required exit doors shall swing in the direction of egress.
- b. Illuminated exit signs, with battery back-up, shall be provided at each exit serving an occupant load of 50 or more. Non-illuminated exit signs are required for all exits with an occupant load < 50.
- c. Exit doors serving an occupant load of 50 or more shall not be provided with a latch or lock unless it is panic hardware.
- d. Emergency lighting, with battery back-up, shall be provided in all rooms, areas and exit pathways when serving an occupant load of 50 or more.
- e. Exhibits and decorative materials shall not obstruct, confuse, or obscure exits, exit pathways, exit signs, or emergency lighting units.
- f. Additional pathway markings, including low-level marking and signs, may be required at time of field inspection.

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3. Fire Protection:

- a. An automatic fire sprinkler system shall be provided.
Exception: When the total floor area is less than 1000 square feet and travel distance to an exit is less than 50 feet.
- b. Provide an approved automatic smoke detection and alarm system in accordance with the California Building Code as required for amusement buildings.
Exception: When the total floor area is less than 1000 square feet and the travel distance to an exit is less than 50 feet, battery operated smoke detectors installed in all areas, and in accordance with their listing, may be used to meet this requirement when approved by the Fire Department.
- c. Provide a public address system in accordance with the California Building Code as required for amusement buildings.
Exception: When the total floor area is less than 1000 square feet and the travel distance to an exit is less than 50 feet, manually activated device(s) suitable for sounding an alarm, or other approved method of alerting staff, shall be provided as approved by the Fire Department. The alarm shall be distinctive in tone and audible throughout the haunted house area.
- d. Fire extinguishers shall be:
 - 1. Minimum 2A10BC rated.
 - 2. Properly mounted (top of unit between three (3) and five (5) feet from floor).
 - 3. Visible and accessible at all times and clearly illuminated or marked with reflective tape.
 - 4. Located within 50 feet travel distance from anywhere in the building.
- e. Decorative material shall not obstruct fire sprinklers, fire extinguishers, or any other fire protection equipment.

4. Electrical

- a. Extension cords shall be of a heavy commercial type, UL listed, in good condition, and shall be appropriate for the intended use.
- b. Only UL-listed power strips with over-current protection shall be used when the number of outlets provided is inadequate. Power strips shall be plugged directly into provided outlets, and shall not be plugged into one another in series.
- c. All extension cords and power strips shall be adequately protected from foot traffic ("bridged") if paths of travel cannot be avoided.
- d. An electrical permit may be required. Contact the local Building Department for requirements.

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- e. Flood and strobe lights shall be plugged directly into a wall outlet, a listed multi-plug power strip, or a single listed extension cord. For string lighting, reference the manufacturer's installation guidelines for the maximum number of string lights that can be strung together (NOTE: when plugging the string lights together, the total amperage of all the light strings shall be calculated to ensure they do not exceed the amperage of the extension cord and circuit).

5. Decorative Materials:

- a. All decorative materials (decorations, drapes, backdrops, props, and other temporary wall coverings) shall be either inherently flame-retardant or labeled as such, or shall be treated with a flame-retardant that is registered with the California State Fire Marshal. **Any material not appropriately labeled as fire retardant shall be flame-tested.**
NOTE: The flame test shall consist of putting a flame to a sample of the material by a match or lighter. The test shall be conducted outside the building, on a specimen of the material approximately three inches (3") wide by ten inches (10") long and oriented at a 45-degree angle from the horizontal. When testing, the flame shall be put to the bottom edge of the material for a period of up to 12 seconds. If the material fails to ignite, or if it ignites and the flame self-extinguishes when the flame source is removed from the sample, the material will be considered satisfactorily flame-retardant.

6. Miscellaneous:

- a. Care and consideration shall be used with respect to smoke generators and smoke detector locations. Use of smoke generators may be restricted if determined to be incompatible with the smoke detectors.
- b. "NO SMOKING" signs shall be provided at the main entrance and throughout exhibit.
- c. Storage or use of flammable or combustible liquids, gasses and solids is prohibited.
- d. Open flame is prohibited.
- e. Good housekeeping shall be maintained throughout exhibit and exit pathways at all times.

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Haunted House / Ghost Walk Event Application Form

1. Event Information:

Address of event: _____

Date of setup: _____ Date of teardown: _____

Date(s) open to public: _____ through _____

Hours of operation: _____

2. Contact Information:

Name(s): _____

Phone(s): _____

Mailing address: _____

3. Other Information:

- a. Description of special effects, including sound, theatrical smoke, lighting (i.e., strobes) and all other effects:

- b. Description of decorations and/or wall coverings being used. Provide documentation for the fire-retardant treated materials being proposed or provide a sample of the material for a flame test.

- c. Provide the following information in accordance with the Haunted House Standard:

1. Site plan for the event
2. Complete floor plan of event area
3. Emergency Evacuation plan
4. Fire protection and detection systems (if applicable)